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# **THE EVENING HOURS**

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**POEMS OF  
EMILE VERHAEREN**

*Cloth 12mo \$1.00 net*

**THE SUNLIT HOURS**

*Cloth 12mo \$1.00 net*

**AFTERNOON**

*Cloth 12mo \$1.00 net*

**JOHN LANE COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK**

# THE EVENING HOURS

BY  
EMILE VERHAEREN

AUTHOR OF  
"THE SUNLIT HOURS," "AFTERNOON,"  
ETC.

TRANSLATED BY  
CHARLES R. MURPHY



NEW YORK  
JOHN LANE COMPANY  
MCMXVIII

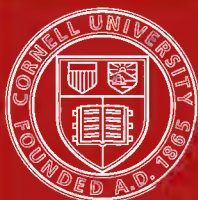
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# THE EVENING HOURS



## I

Tender flowers, light as the sea's foam,  
Graced our garden way;  
The lapsing wind would give your hands  
caress  
And with your hair would play.

The shade was kind to our united steps  
That wandered soberly;  
And from the village a child's song arose  
To fill infinity.

Our ponds extended in the autumn light  
Beneath the guarding reed,  
And the wood's forehead showed its  
mobile crown  
To pools upon the mead.

## THE EVENING HOURS

And we, who knew our hearts were mur-  
muring

In union but one prayer,  
Thought that it was our peaceful life the  
eve  
Showed unveiled there.

Supremely then you saw the sky aglow  
For a farewell caress;  
And long and long you looked on it with  
eyes  
Filled with mute tenderness.

## II

If it be true  
That garden flower or meadow tree  
May hold still any memory  
Of lovers past who once looked on  
Their splendour or their purity,  
So shall our love return once more  
In that long hour of long regret  
To give the rose, or in the oak restore,  
Its sweetness or its strength,  
Ere death come yet.

Thus shall it survive unconquerèd  
Within the glory that belongs to simple  
things,

## THE EVENING HOURS

And find a joy again in light that cleaves  
The sky on summer break of day,  
And find a joy again  
In the sweet rain  
That dwells in drops on hanging leaves.

And if on some fair eve, from depths of  
space,  
Should come two lovers hand in hand,  
The oak, like a large and puissant wing  
Would reach its shadow out to where they  
stand,  
And the rose would give them of its per-  
fumed grace.

### III

Dead is the glycin and the hawthorne  
flower;

But now is the time when heather-bloom  
is seen,

And on this so calm eve the rustling wind  
Brings you the fragrance of the starved  
Campine.

Love and breathe them, thinking of its  
fate;

Over that rugged soil the storm-wind  
lives;

Sand and sea have made of it their prey,  
Yet of the little left, it ever gives.

## THE EVENING HOURS

Of old, though autumn came, we dwelled  
with it,  
With plain and forest, with the storm  
and light,  
Until the angels of the Christmas time  
Inscribed its legend with their winged  
flight.

Your heart became more simple and more  
sure;  
We loved the villagers and the forlorn  
Old women who would speak of their  
great age  
And of old spinning-wheels their hands  
had worn.

Our quiet house upon the misty heath  
Was frank and welcoming to all who  
came;

## THE EVENING HOURS

Its roof was dear to us, its door and sill,  
And hearth long blackened by familiar  
flame.

When over vast, pale, measureless repose  
The total splendour of the night was set,  
A lesson of deep silence we received,  
Whose ardour never shall our souls forget.

Since we were more alone amid the plain,  
The dawn and evening entered more  
our thought,  
Our eyes were franker and our hearts  
more sweet  
And with the world's desire more fully  
fraught.

## THE EVENING HOURS

We found content in not exacting it;  
The sadness, even, of the days was kind,  
And the rare sunlight of the autumn's end  
Charmed us the more that it seemed  
weak and blind.

Dead is the glycin and the hawthorne  
flower;  
But now are the days when heather-  
bloom is seen,  
Remember these, and let the rustling wind  
Bring you the fragrance of the starved  
Campine.

#### IV

Draw your chair to mine  
And stretch your hands to the hearth,  
That I may see between your fingers  
Shine  
The ancient flame;  
And look upon the fire  
Quietly, with your eyes  
That have no fear of any light,  
So that for me they be the same,  
Yet franker when the blaze leaps higher  
Making them as from deep within you,  
bright.

Ah, how fair still is our life and fain!  
When the clock strikes out its notes of  
gold

## THE EVENING HOURS

And I approach you and as a flower hold;  
And a fever slow and pure,  
Which we will not to restrain,  
Leads the kiss, marvellous and sure,  
From hand to brow, from brow to lips  
again.

How well I love you, O my clear beloved,  
Your swooning body, caressing and  
caressed,  
In whose depth of joy I almost drown.  
All is more dear to me, your lips, your  
arms close-pressed,  
And your kind bosom whereon my tired  
head  
After the rapture you bestow, sinks down  
Quietly, near your heart to find its rest.

## THE EVENING HOURS

I love you still more after love's sharp  
    pain  
When your goodness still more sure and  
    motherly  
Brings repose to passion's ardency,  
And, when desire has cried aloud its will,  
I hear approach familiar joy again,  
With steps that almost silence are, it is so  
    still.

## V

Be kind and comforting to us, oh light!  
And bathe our foreheads now, oh wintry  
ray!  
When we two issue forth this afternoon  
To breathe together the last warmth of  
day.

We loved you formerly with such a pride,  
With such a love as our two souls could  
lend,  
That a supreme and, sweet and friendly  
flame  
Is due us now that we await the end.

## THE EVENING HOURS

You are that which no man may forget,  
From dawn that smites his arm uncon-  
quered  
To evening when you sleep within his eyes  
Your strength abolished and your  
splendour dead.

Always for us you were the seen desire  
Spreading through all, luminous and  
free,  
That with impassioned ardour deep and  
high  
Seemed from our heart to seek infinity.

## VI

Alas the time of crimson phlox is past  
And of proud roses brightening the  
gate.

What matter? Still I love with all my  
heart

Our garden, tho' deflow'ed and deso-  
late.

More dear than are the joyous summer  
noons,

My garden is that now forlornly  
grieves;

Oh the last perfumes languidly exhaled  
By a late flower in the lingering leaves!

## THE EVENING HOURS

This evening I wandered in the paths  
Over the plants my fervent touch to  
pass,  
And falling on my knees I pressed my  
lips  
To the wet earth among the trembling  
grass.

And now that it is dying and the night  
Has misted all the garden with its  
breath,  
My being that so dwells in all this ruin  
Shall learn to die in sharing thus its  
death.

## VII

The evening falls, the moon is gold. . . .

Before the day is spent  
Go out and wander in the garden walks  
And pluck with gentle hands  
The few remaining flowers that on their  
    stalks  
'Are not yet sadly bent toward the mould.

What matter if their foliage be wan?  
We still admire and love,  
And still their chalices are beautiful above  
The stems they rest upon.

## THE EVENING HOURS

You wander mid the borders here and  
there

Along a lonely path,  
And the flowers you bear  
Tremble in your hand that shudders as it  
takes.

And now your dreamy fingers  
Reverently shape the sere  
Roses wherein autumn lingers,  
Weaving them with many a tear,  
Into a crown of pale, clear flakes.

The last light dwells upon your eyes and  
brow  
And your slow steps are sad and quiet  
now. . . .

Slowly, at the vesper, through the gloam,  
With empty hands you wandered home,

## THE EVENING HOURS

Leaving, upon a little humid mound,  
On the path that to our doorway led,  
The pale circlet that your fingers bound.  
And I knew that in our garden perishèd,  
Where winds now pass like cohorts over-  
head,  
You would give flower again for one last  
time,  
To our youth that lies upon the ground  
Dead. . . .

## VIII

When you store away in fragrant shelves,  
Some autumn eve, the fruits of orchard  
trees,  
I seem to see you calmly ranging there  
Our old, but fresh and perfumed mem-  
ories.

And love returns for them as once they  
were,  
The wind on lips and sunlight in my  
eyes;  
I see the vanished moments once again,  
Their joy, their mirth, their fevers and  
their cries.

## THE EVENING HOURS

The past comes back to life with such desire

To be the present with its force again,  
That half-extinct fires burn with sudden  
flame,

My heart exults and swoons as though  
in pain.

Oh fruits that glow amid the autumn  
shadows,

Jewels fallen from the summer's string  
Of gems, illumining our sombre hours,  
What red awakening is this you bring!

## IX

Fallen is the leafage from above  
That covered all the garden with its  
shade;  
See, between the naked boughs far off  
The village roofs to the horizon fade.

While summer flamed its joy, neither of  
us  
Saw them clustered there so near our  
home;  
But to-day, with leaf and flower dead,  
Into our thinking they more often come.

## THE EVENING HOURS

Others are living there behind those walls  
And those worn thresholds with the  
porch above,  
Having for only friends the wind and  
rain  
And the lighted lamp to give them love.

In the fall of eve, when fires are lit,  
And the pauses of the clock they heed,  
Dear, as to us, the silence is to them,  
The thoughts within their eyes that they  
may read.

Those hours of intimacy naught disturbs,  
Of tender and profound tranquillity,  
Blessing the instant past for having been  
And finding dearer yet the one to be.

## THE EVENING HOURS

See how they hold between their trembling  
hands

A happiness of pain and pleasure born;  
Known to each the other's body old  
And aged eyes by the same sorrows  
worn.

The flowers of their life, they love them  
faded,

The final perfume and the beauty brief,  
And heavy memory of glory waning,  
Wasting in time's garden, leaf by leaf.

Deep in their warmth of human feeling  
hid,

From the winter sheltered and recluse,

## THE EVENING HOURS

Nothing abases them or makes them pine  
And plead for days they are content to  
lose.

The quiet folk of those old villages,  
What neighbours are they to our happiness!  
And how we find our own tears in their  
eyes,  
Our strength and ardour in their fear-  
lessness!

Down there, beneath their roofs, by win-  
dowside  
Or seated by the glowing fireside, thus,  
Perhaps on such a night of wind and wet,  
What we have thought of them they  
think of us.

## X

When the star-lit heaven broods above our  
house

We sit in silence during many hours  
Beneath its soft intensity of light  
To feel more ardent still these selves  
of ours.

The silver stars are drifting on their way;  
Beneath their flame and all their glis-  
tening

The great night is deeper and more deep;  
Such calm there is, the sea is listening!

## THE EVENING HOURS

What matter if the sea itself be still,  
If in this infinity so fair,  
Pregnant now with yet unvisioned power,  
Our beating hearts make all the silence  
there?

## XI

That very love which made you be for me  
A splendid garden wherein moving tree  
Made shadow over sward and docile rose,  
Makes you the shelter where I now repose.

There garnered are your flowers of desire,  
Your lucent goodness and your gentle fire;  
But all within a peace profound are furled  
Against harsh winter winds that scar the  
world.

My happiness is warmed within your  
arms;  
Each little tender word you whisper  
charms

## THE EVENING HOURS

My ear with as familiar a delight  
As in the time when lilacs blossomed white.

Your clear and merry humour daily cheers  
And triumphs over the distress of years;  
And you yourself smile at the silver hairs  
That your lovely head so gaily wears.

When to my searching kiss your head you  
    bow,  
I care not for the lines that mark your  
    brow,  
Nor for a vein that traces its bold line  
Upon your hands now safely held in mine.

You fear not; and you know most certainly  
That nothing dies that dares love loyally,  
And that the flame which nourishes us so  
Feeds upon ruin's self that it may grow.

## XII

Those clear welcoming flowers along the  
wall's extent  
Will be no longer waiting for us at our  
return;  
The silken waters that prolonged till they  
were spent,  
Under a pure sweet sky no longer reach  
and yearn.

Of our melancholy plains the flying birds  
are shy;  
Over the marshes pale mists begin to  
crawl;

## THE EVENING HOURS

Autumn, winter! Winter, autumn!—oh  
the cry!

In the forest do you hear the dead wood  
fall?

Our garden is no longer bridegroom of  
the light,

Where once we saw the phlox in glorious  
surge and flare;

Gladioli, in dust, once violent, upright,

Lingeringly have lain them down to  
perish there.

All is without strength or beauty, without  
fire,

Fleeing and quailing and crumbling and  
passing sadly by;

## THE EVENING HOURS

Oh, turn on me your eyes of light, for I  
desire

There to seek a corner of our early  
sky!

It is there alone our light may still abide,  
The light that filled the garden once  
for you and me,

Long ago, when our lily lifted its white  
pride

And hollyhocks were an ascending  
ardency.

### XIII

When the diamond grains of fresh snow  
On our threshold lie,  
I hear your steps that come and go  
In the room near by.

You move the clear mirror that beside  
The window stood,  
And your bunch of keys strikes the drawer  
Of the chest of wood.

I hear you stirring now the fire—  
The live coal flares;  
And hear you place by silent walls  
The silent chairs.

## THE EVENING HOURS

I hear you wipe the dust from objects  
As you pass,  
And your ring resounds against the side  
Of a vibrant glass.

And happier am I still, this eve,  
With your presence dear—  
To feel you close, and not to see,  
But always hear.

## XIV

If fate has saved us from the banal sins  
Of cowardly untruth and sad pretence,  
It is because we would have no constraint  
Whose yoke should bend our will with  
violence.

Free and sunlit on your road you fared,  
Strewing with flowers of will your  
flowers of love;  
Pausing to sustain me when my head  
Bowed to the weight of doubt or fear  
above.

## THE EVENING HOURS

Always you were of gesture kind and  
frank,  
Knowing my heart for you forever  
burned;  
For if I loved another—could it be?—  
Always it was to your heart I returned.

So pure your eyes were in their weeping  
that  
My truth to you became my only lord;  
I spoke to you then sweet and sacred  
words,  
Your sorrow and your pardon were  
your sword.

I fell asleep at evening on your breast,  
Glad with return from distance false and  
bleak

## THE EVENING HOURS

To warmth of spring within us, glad  
within

Your open arms captivity to seek.

## XV

No, my soul has never tired of you!

In the time of June you said to me:  
"If I thought, beloved, if I thought  
That my love would ever weary you,  
With my sad thoughts and my lonely  
heart,  
No matter where, I should depart. . . ."

And sweetly sought the kiss I gave anew.

And you said again:  
"One loses everything, life would repay;  
What though it be of gold,

## THE EVENING HOURS

The chain  
That in one harbour's ring can hold  
Our human ships to-day?"

And sweetly wept for pain you could not  
say.

And you said  
Again and yet again:  
"Let us separate, before we be untrue;  
Our life's too pure and high  
To draw it out from fault to fault, and  
drain  
It wearily away." . . . You sought to fly  
From me whose desperate hands strove to  
retain.

No, my soul has never tired of you!

## XVI

Ah, we are happy still and proud to live  
When the last ray, that's seen and then  
is lost,

Brightens an instant the poor flowers of  
rime

Engraved upon our window by the frost.

Life leaps within us and hope sweeps us  
on;

And our garden, though it be now old,  
Though its paths be strewn with fallen  
boughs,

Seems living, pure and clear and lit with  
gold.

## THE EVENING HOURS

Something invades our blood, intrepid,  
    bright,  
And urges us to incarnate again  
Immense, full summer in the fervid kiss  
    That desperately we give each other  
    then.

## XVII

Alas, must we accept the weight of years  
And find us nothing more than tranquil  
folk

Who give each other infantile caress  
At eve, when hearth is quick with flame  
and smoke?

Our dear belongings, shall they see us then  
Creeping from the hearth to wooden  
chest,

To reach the window leaning on the wall,  
Sitting to give our tottering bodies rest?

## THE EVENING HOURS

If such a day must then affirm our ruin  
And show the torpor brain or body  
fears,  
In spite of this fate we shall not complain,  
But keep within our breasts our captive  
tears.

For we shall guard these eyes of ours to  
watch  
For morn to follow night so pitiful,  
And see the sun of dawn burn on this life,  
Making of earth itself a miracle.

## XVIII

All little facts, the things of no account,  
A letter, date, an anniversary,  
A word that's spoken as on days long past,  
Exalt, on these long evenings, you and  
me.

We solemnise, we two, these simple things  
And count and recount all these gems of  
ours,

So that what is left of our high selves  
May face valiantly these sombre hours.

And we are jealous more than it is meet  
Of these poor, gentle, friendly mem-  
ories

## THE EVENING HOURS

Who seat themselves with us beside the  
fire

With winter flowers laid across thin  
knees.

And the bread of happiness which once

We did partake of, now they sit and  
eat;

The bread on which our love has fed so  
long

That now it finds the very crumbs are  
sweet.

## XIX

Come to our threshold now, oh snow,  
Strew thy pallid ash,  
Oh peaceful and slow falling snow;  
The linden in the garden hangs its  
    branches low  
And to the sky no flights of wood-larks go.

Oh snow,  
Who warmest and dost shield  
The corn that is hardly sprung  
With the moss, with the down  
Strewn on the spreading field!  
Silent snow, oh friendly one  
To houses sleeping in the morning calm,

## THE EVENING HOURS

Cover our roof and brush our window-  
frames;

Oh luminous snow, into our very soul

To find a way do thou not scorn,

Snow that warmest still our last of dreams

Like the springing corn.

## XX

When our clear garden lifted up its  
flow'rs

The self-accusations made by each.  
For failure of our love, broke into speech  
In passionate hours;  
And needed pardon offered and new peace  
And explanations of our miseries  
And tears that wet our sad and truthful  
eyes.

Gave love increase.

But in these months of dreary rain  
When all retires to earth again,  
When even light is fain  
To find its war with darkness vain,

## THE EVENING HOURS

No longer are our souls so strong and  
proud  
That, rapturously, they should confess  
aloud.

In lowered voice our sins we say,  
Though still in tenderness, not scorn;  
But 'tis at twilight now and not at morn.  
Sometimes we even count them, wrong by  
wrong,  
Like things that one counts over  
And puts away;  
And their folly or their hurt to cover  
We argue long.

## XXI

With withered hands I touch your brow  
And part your hair and kiss—(as the  
day dies  
And you are briefly sleeping by the hearth)  
Beneath long lashes hid, your fervent  
eyes.

Oh the dear tenderness of sinking day!  
I think of the long years whose flight we  
saw,  
And suddenly your life in them appears  
So perfect that my love is filled with  
awe.

## THE EVENING HOURS

And as in that time when we were betrothed,

Ardour again is in me and has brought  
Desire to kneel and touch your beating  
breast

With fingers that are chaste as is my  
thought.

## XXII

Our hearts once burned in joyous days  
With love as luminous as high,  
But age to-day has made us weak  
With faults we dare deny.

Thou dost not nourish us, oh will,  
By thine ardour in the strife,  
But soft benevolence alone  
Colours now our life.

We near thy brink of setting, Love,  
And try to hide our frailty's pain  
In banal words and poor discourse  
Of wisdom slow and vain.

## THE EVENING HOURS

How sad the future then would be,  
If when our days grow wintrier  
There flame not forth the memory  
Of the proud souls we were.

## XXIII

This wrinkled winter when the ruined sun  
Founders in the west and sinks below,  
I love to say your name, so grave and  
    slow,  
While the clock strikes another day now  
    done.

And saying it so ravishes my voice  
That from my lips it sinks into my heart,  
And among all sweet words that there  
    have part,  
Makes me the most ardently rejoice.

## THE EVENING HOURS

And in the wind of dawn or evening's  
breath

Changeless I reiterate the theme;

Oh, think with what a passion, strong,  
supreme,

Shall I pronounce it at the hour of death!

## XXIV

Perhaps,  
On my last day,  
Perhaps,  
Across my window sill,  
The sunlight frail and still  
Will fall and for a moment stay. . . .

My hands—my hands then poor and  
witherèd—  
By its glory will be made to gold;  
Slowly its kiss will glide, profound and  
bright,  
For the last time upon my mouth and  
head;

## THE EVENING HOURS

And the flowers of my eyes, pale yet bold,  
Before they close, shall render back its  
light.

Sun, I loved your strength and clarity, indeed!

My sweet and fiery poems at their height  
Have held you captive in the heart of  
them;

Like field of wheat that surges in the might  
Of summer wind my words exalted you.

Oh sun, who bring to birth and flower the  
stem,

Oh immense friend, of whom our pride  
has need,

In that so grave, imperious hour and new,  
When my old heart sadly endures the test,  
Be you still its witness and its guest!

## XXV

Clasped about my neck and harbouring my  
breast,

Ah your so dear hands now and their  
slow caress,

When I tell you, in the evening, how my  
strength

Grows leaden day by day with weight of  
feebleness!

You wish it not that I become shadow and  
ruin

Like all those who obey the gloomy  
night's behests,

## THE EVENING HOURS

Though it be with laurel in their mournful  
    hands  
And glory sleeping in their hollow  
    breasts.

Ah how time's harsh law is softened by  
    your love  
And how your lovely dream disconsolate  
    tears would stem;  
For the first and only time you nurse with  
    lies  
My heart that finds excuse and gives  
    you thanks for them.

Which, however, knows all ardour is in  
    vain  
Against what is and all that must be in  
    the strife,

## THE EVENING HOURS

And that perhaps there is profounder happiness

To end thus in your eyes my lovely human life.

## XXVI

When you shall close these eyes of mine  
to light,

Oh kiss them long—for all that love  
afire

May hope to give they shall have given  
you

In that last look of ultimate desire.

Beneath the moveless glow of candle light,

Oh lean to them your face so fain and  
brave

That on them be impressed this sight  
alone

That they shall keep forever in the  
grave.

## THE EVENING HOURS

And may I feel, before the tomb is mine,  
    Upon the pure, white bed our hands  
        that seek

Each other once again, and near my head  
    Feel for the last time repose your cheek;

And know that I shall go away with heart  
    Burning still for you so passionately  
That even through the mute and stony  
    earth

    The dead themselves shall feel its  
        ardency!













